

# **AN INTERVIEW WITH STANLEY WEINER**

An Oral History Conducted by Kyle Wolff

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The Southern Nevada Jewish Community  
Digital Heritage Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV  
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**The place: 3952 Florrie Circle, Las Vegas, Nevada. The interviewer is Kyle Wolff, 2109 Sundale. The project is Local History Project, Oral Interviews, Observations of a Las Vegas Man.**

**Okay, Stan. When did your family first arrive in Las Vegas?**

We arrived in Las Vegas in May of 1953.

**Where did you come from?**

We came out from New York City. My father came out about three or four months ahead of time to set up his business and we followed him out here in May of that year.

**How many people are in your family?**

We've got four in our family; myself, my sister and my mother and my father.

**Let's go to the jobs of your family members now. What did you father exactly do?**

My father originally came out here to set up a printing business, which he stayed in for about a year and a half and then the business went defunct. So he went into the hotel business from the printing business. His first job in the hotels was in the Moulin Rouge, which was one of the first hotels to open in—one of the first black hotels, actually, to open in Las Vegas. It just catered strictly to the blacks. That was only open for a year or two and it went bust because the black people couldn't support it. From there he went to the Fremont Hotel where he was a floor man for about six years. From there he opened up his own businesses, which he's currently in now, which is the check cashing business.

**Where was that Moulin Rouge located?**

The Moulin Rouge was located on the west side of town. It was under the Bonanza underpass.

**What about your mother, what did she do when she came here?**

When my mother first came here, she didn't work. She went to work three or four years after she

came to Las Vegas. She worked first for a lawyer and then she was a bookkeeper and secretary for Taylor Steel Company of Las Vegas, which is now defunct. Her boss at that time was killed in an airplane crash coming back from Salt Lake City with three or four people. From there she and one of the superintendents from Taylor Steel went into their own business, which is currently Steel Incorporated and they're Erector Steel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**What about your sister?**

My sister also came out here with us and she went all through school here, all through high school. She graduated from Las Vegas High School and enrolled at Arizona State where she graduated with a degree in international relations. She's currently living in Cincinnati with her daughter and working on her doctor's degree while she teaches college there part-time.

**Why is she the only member who left Las Vegas?**

Well, she left Las Vegas because...she's divorced now, but her husband was in the food business and he got a job back in Cincinnati and she went back there with him. When they got divorced she decided to stay because she wanted to go to school back there. She thought they had a very good program in her field and she decided to stay on there until she got her doctor's degree.

**Let's talk a little bit about you now. What did you do when you came here?**

I was about seven or eight years old when I came to Las Vegas. I went all through the schools here. I went to Crestwood as a grammar school. From there I went to John C. Fremont, which while I was there turned into a junior high. From there I went to Las Vegas High School. And from there I went to the University of Nevada of Las Vegas where I graduated with a degree in business.

**What have you done for jobs?**

Well, actually, I haven't had a lot of jobs in Las Vegas. My first job was at the Flamingo Hotel

when I was in high school and I was a busboy there for three summers. From there when I went on to college, I went to work part-time at Sears and worked in many different departments there. I'm currently still at Sears. I'm a department manager now in the hardware department.

**You say your family moved out here in '53. Where did you live when you first moved out here and how is the appearance of it compared to as it is now?**

When we first came out here, we lived on the east side of town. The east side of town was probably the most built up side of the town when we came out here. All the population was mostly settled there. There was not much out in the western part of town or out north. Currently now there's been a lot of building—well, north, west and east, this town has really expanded. But when we came here there was very little building going on. In fact, there was kind of a shortage of houses. Right now they're experiencing the same thing in Reno. The boom is getting so big, there's so many people currently coming into Reno that they can't keep up with the housing boom there and there's quite a shortage of houses. It was the same way when we came to Las Vegas. There was just not a house to be found. In fact, my father had a hard time even finding a house to rent at that time. After we got here, they opened up another tract on the east side of town. It was actually one of the first tracts in the last five or six years to open. They opened this up and in order to get a house you had to come down there and put a hundred-dollar deposit down. I can still remember when we went down there people were waving hundred-dollar bills. It was so tough to even get a house at that time. The boom was so great that they just couldn't keep up with the housing.

**Is that the only place you lived in town or have you moved since then?**

We lived over on—in fact, the first house we bought, I can still remember the address; it was 1700 Canosa Avenue, which was the east part of town. We lived there for eight or nine years.

Than my folks bought a house up on the west side of town on Sundale. They're currently still in this house. Since then I've moved around a little bit. I've owned my own condominium, which I currently still own and rent out, and I've got a house right now currently on the east side of town right off Boulder Highway and Viking.

**Why did your parents move to the west side of town?**

Well, the reason they moved is they wanted to get into a little bit better house. When they first came here, the housing was a lot different than it is now. The average house only had a swamp cooler. This first house they bought on Canosa had the swamp cooler and it wasn't the best built house either. They decided they wanted to get a little bit better house and have refrigeration and a few other things, and a pool and whatever, and they wanted to buy a new house. So they moved up on the west side of town.

**Around what time did these air conditioners come around here?**

I think air-conditioning probably started to get popular about 1963 where all the houses they started to build they put refrigeration units up. Prior to that most of the houses just had swamp coolers and if you wanted refrigeration you had to convert to it, which was an expensive ordeal at that time.

**Let's talk about the west side of town now. How did that appear to you? Were there many houses?**

Well, when we first came to Las Vegas there was very, very few houses out on the west side of town. Where Arville is now, that was like being in the middle of nowhere because there were just very few houses. There were very few custom-built houses, which are still standing, on Arville. There was very little activity on the west side of town. All the activity was centered, I believe, mostly on the east side of town, like I said before. It's only been in the last ten or fifteen

years where the west side has really gotten built up and a lot of people have started to move out there.

**Were the roads paved up there or how far were they paved?**

Well, as I can remember, I believe that when we came to Las Vegas, Sahara wasn't even paved. I believe that was a dirt road. And then I think about fifteen to sixteen years ago they paved Sahara up to the Strip. And from there they've paved Sahara all the way up; I think it's past Rainbow or whatever. But there was nothing west of Sahara. There were no paved roads at that time. You've got Flamingo now and Spring Mountain; there was no such roads at that time. Actually, the main thoroughfares I can remember getting to the west side of town was either Sahara or West Charleston. Otherwise, all these other roads are all brand-new over the last fifteen to sixteen years. There wasn't even a dirt road to get up these other streets like Spring Mountain or Tropicana or Flamingo, any of those streets.

**How were the colored sections of town divided?**

Like actually it still is. When we came here the Westside was here. It wasn't near the population that there is now because they've built a lot of housing tracts, whatever, on the Westside. When we came here they were more like shanty houses and that. The black people in Las Vegas were a very poor group because I can still remember in 1953 when I was just seven or eight years old, my uncle—one of the black families, their house had burned down on the Westside of town and they had a big fundraising just to get these people enough money to build them another house and whatever on the Westside of town. But the black population was centered on the Westside. They weren't around any other—the east, the west or whatever. They were strictly on the Westside.



**Were there many black people in Nevada at that time when you first moved here?**

When we first moved here, as I remember—this is just what I remember—there were very few black people. Most of the black people were here were working in the hotels or at the airport as maintenance men or porters or whatever. Since we've been here, of course like every other city in the United States, the black population has really expanded and they've improved themselves a great deal. They've got better jobs and whatever. They've really improved their standard of living.

**Let's go into the area of education now. Let's first talk about grammar schools. How many were there?**

Well, I don't remember the exact amount of grammar schools when we first came here. I remember three or four grammar schools. There was John S. Park and Crestwood where I was enrolled when I first came here and two or three other grammar schools that I can remember. I think on the Westside they had Matt Kelly Elementary School. I don't really remember exactly now. But those are the only elementary schools I remember. There were no such things as junior highs in Las Vegas at that time in 1953. That came later on.

**What junior high did you go to?**

I went to John C. Fremont. When I first started there—I believe I started there in the fourth or fifth grade—it wasn't a junior high. But when I was in the sixth grade, it became the first school to convert solely to a junior high. After that they started building junior highs. But I believe John C. Fremont was the first school to convert to a junior high. I went through junior high—seventh, eighth and ninth—at John C. Fremont.

**Do you have any idea of how the other junior highs followed?**

No. Well, the other junior highs, they built a lot of junior highs, just designated as junior highs.

But as I can remember, John C. Fremont was the only one that actually converted to a junior high. There could be more. I'm just not sure of that.

**What about high schools, how have they developed and come along?**

When we came to Las Vegas, there was only two high schools and that was—actually, I believe there was only one high school, Las Vegas High in 1953. I'm not sure of the exact date, I believe about 1958 they opened Rancho High School. When I went to high school, they had Rancho High and Las Vegas, they had Basic in Henderson and Boulder City High in Boulder City. The other high schools, the next two high schools to be built, I believe, were Clark and Valley. Then from there they've added Bonanza and Chaparral and Eldorado and many others. I'm not sure of all the high schools we have in Las Vegas now.

**You said Clark and Valley were the next ones to be built. Now, was that correspondent with the population growth? Like Clark is on the west end of town now.**

Right, right. As the town grew towards the east and towards the west, they opened Valley High School in the eastern part of town where the population—the big thing, the east was really expanding and so was the west. So they had to have a couple more high schools because the other high schools were really overcrowded. Everybody from the east was going to either Rancho and from the west I think more of them were going to Las Vegas. So they opened Clark on the west side of town on Arville and then they opened Valley on Eastern.

**What was the trend after Valley, then?**

Well, I believe now after Valley the town started to spread out in so many different areas have become more and more popular, so they had to have more high schools in the east and more in the west. That's why you see Bonanza's opened and Eldorado, I believe, in the eastern part of town has also opened as the town's expanded.

**What about UNLV? How did UNLV appear when you first moved here?**

When we first moved here there was no UNLV. In fact, I'm not sure of the exact date. I think about 1958t or '59, Dean Carlson that's currently still out at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas—I think he teaches in the educational branch there—taught the first night school or whatever for the university and that was taught at Las Vegas High. It was like an extension over there. Then from there they had their first building on Maryland Parkway. In fact, I can remember on Maryland Parkway, I believe that was a dirt road getting out to the university at that time when they first opened it up. They opened up Grant Hall. And from there they had Frazier Hall. And then later on the school has kept building now. In the last five or six years they've really expanded out at UNLV.

**Well, how many students were there when it first opened and how did the population of students grow?**

I'm not sure of the number of students when it first opened. Probably the first class they had as an extension course at Las Vegas High maybe they had fifteen or eighteen students. Then when they opened up the university out there, they probably had sixty to seventy and it just kept growing and growing as the population increased.

**Let's talk about the population of Las Vegas a little bit more. What was the population like when you first arrived here?**

I believe the population was about thirty-two thousand in 1953 and now I think it's over three hundred thousand. So you can see that it's really growing. When we first came to Las Vegas, you kind of knew everybody. It was like a small town, thirty-three thousand people. Most everybody that was here was somehow involved in the gambling. The population centered around the gambling.

**What year or period of time did the population seem to grow the most to you?**

Well, I think in the late '50s and early '60s where they had this tremendous boom in hotels. When we first came here a lot of people thought that they had too many hotels then. But as tourism grew and the transportation industry—airplanes and everything, the jets and everything—that came into existence, this town just boomed overnight and they kept opening more and more hotels and the population kept increasing. They needed people to run these hotels. They needed maintenance men in the hotels. Everything was centered around the hotels, which it still mainly is today.

**What type of people made up the population of Las Vegas?**

Well, like I say, mostly—the greater portion of people came from the East—Chicago, New York—where the hotel industry and gambling was big then and these people came out to run these hotels. So you got most of your people from Back East. It's only recently that people have moved in from the West and Midwest and whatever to Las Vegas. The people still come mostly from the East, I believe, to get into the gambling.

**I heard you mention something about transportation. So let's go into the transportation systems when you first arrived here. Let's take the airport.**

Well, if we take the airplane first, where Hughes terminal currently is on the Strip, that's where McCarran Airport was then. When we first came there were about five airlines housed in this airport. There was TWA, United, Bonanza, which is now known as Hughes, and I believe Western. These four airlines flew to different parts of the country. It seemed like as the town got bigger and bigger, they had to expand. It really boomed. So they eventually moved out to McCarran, which is on Paradise, and Hughes bought out the old McCarran terminal, which is currently a private airport that houses private planes and whatever. That's when the town really

started expanding when they opened this new airport.

**About what period of time did the increase in the amount of tourists cause the movement?**

Well, I would say, again, like in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Not only was the airport opening, but then also we had the freeway started getting done from Las Vegas to Los Angeles.

**Okay, Stan, how was the freeway system set up when you first arrived in Las Vegas?**

When we first arrived in Las Vegas, there was no such thing as a freeway. The road from California to Las Vegas where we get most of our tourism still that come on weekends was just a two-lane road. In fact, before they reduced the speed limit, on the new freeway you could be in Los Angeles in four hours. Now, before there was any freeway at all, it used to take up to ten or twelve hours just to get from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. The roads were really bad. It was two lanes and you get in back of buses or whatever. Then when the freeway went in, we used to get a lot of tourists from the Los Angeles area or Los Angeles and Northern (sic) California. Then it probably tripled because everybody was able to get on this freeway and get to Las Vegas in four hours. In fact, the freeway from Las Vegas to Los Angeles is probably one of the best stretches of road in the United States. It's really terrific. It was a boom for our tourist industry when they opened up this freeway. A lot of people like to drive and it made the driving very easy. I think most of it is three lanes on each side from Las Vegas to Los Angeles and it makes traveling just great.

**Now, continuing with the transportation system, what about the buses? How were they when you first arrived here?**

When we first arrived here in 1953, I'm not sure if there was even a bus line. I think the buses really started in about 1958 or '59. I could be wrong here. But the transportation system as far as the bussing line here has always been poor. They always seem to be off schedule. I don't

know if they've improved at all over the years. But up until about 1967 or '69, as I can remember, the buses were very poor. They continually broke down. They were never kept up very well.

**Did people tend to travel on these when they first started?**

No. The bus line has never really been big in Las Vegas. The transportation system has always been bad, the inner transportation system. Most people in Las Vegas, because it's so spread out, have to have their own cars to get around. You can't depend on a bus to get from one side of town to the other because if you do you might transfer. By the time you take two transfers, you might be three or four hours just getting from one side of town to the other. But with a car you can be there in fifteen or twenty minutes.

**How much would they charge you? What was the fee for a bus ride?**

I believe when I went to high school—and I don't even know the fee now because I haven't been on the bus in ten years or twelve years—but I believe when I went to high school it was thirty cents for each fare and if you had a transfer it was fifteen cents. When we lived on Canosa on the east part of town, if you wanted to go from the east side of town to the west side of town, you'd have to first take a bus downtown. And the old bus depot was located on Fourth Street. From there you'd probably wait forty-five to fifty minutes to get your bus to the west side of town. Then you'd proceed to the west side of town. So it was about a two- to three-hour ordeal just getting from one side of town to the other on a bus.

**So at that time there was only one bus depot, too, then, right?**

Well, there's still only one transportation system as far as the municipal bussing in Las Vegas, still.

**What about the cabs, approximately how many cab companies existed?**

I believe when we came to town the only cabs they had was Yellow Cab. Then from there now you've got Yellow Cab, you've got Checker Cab, you've got Whittlesea.

**When did all these come into existence?**

These came into existence in the late '50s, I believe, and early 1960s. And you had these big companies and you had a lot of little companies that came into existence, cab companies. A lot of them have gone to defunct now because it's tough to be a small businessman as far as a cab driver in Las Vegas.

**So, in other words, there was fierce competition between the companies?**

Yeah, there was a lot of competition and there still remains a lot of competition in the cabs. In fact, most of your cab companies have now gone in for the air-conditioned cabs and whatever, anything to attract the people here to get in their type of cab.

**Let's go to the churches of the area. Now, what type of religion dominated when you first moved here in 1953?**

As far as I can remember everywhere I look around Nevada or the outskirts, it's always been the Mormon religion. I believe the Mormon religion was most prevalent at that time and after that it was probably the Catholics. The other religions were very small in Las Vegas. But the Mormon religion and Catholic religion has always been big in Nevada.

**Where were these churches located?**

I believe the first Mormon church that I can remember was located by this old Mormon Fort, somewhere in Las Vegas. The Catholic church, I can remember a lot of Catholic churches on the east side of town. Then they had a few other Mormon churches in the outlying areas. Anytime you see a new area go up in Las Vegas, you probably see a Mormon church right next to it.

**What is your religion?**

My religion is Jewish.

**How was it situated when you first moved here?**

When we first came here there were very few. It's grown now in the last eighteen to twenty years where there's a lot of Jews in Las Vegas now. A lot of these people are involved in the hotels. The Mormons and Jews are kind of the people that run these hotels.

**Where were your churches situated?**

When we first came here we had a very little church and it was over on the east side of town—not on the east, pardon me, on the south side of town. It was just a little church. I believe they only had two to three hundred members at that time. Of course, since then it's really expanded. Now they have two different churches now, one on the west side of town and one on the south side of town. I'm not sure just how many people are in them now, but they've expanded quite a bit.

**Let's talk about stores a little bit now. Where was the most convenient shopping area around here?**

When we first came here, and it's been like this up until the last eight or ten years, if you did any shopping, you always went downtown. You had your big department stores at that time, which was Penney's and Sears and the old Ronzone's, which is currently Diamonds today. Ronzone's was one of your nicer places to shop. As far as men's stores, you had Allen and Hansen and Christensen's; and women's store, you had Chic Hecht. I can remember that as one store.

Actually, to do any shopping as far as clothes, the main part of town was to go down on Fremont Street in Las Vegas.

**Which stores were the most popular?**

I'd say the most popular men's store probably was Allen and Hansen. Then you always had



Sears and Penney's, which were two big retail stores that did an awful lot of business. Because they were the only two big retail stores around Nevada, people came in from Moapa and from Boulder City and from Henderson, whatever. If they had to go shopping, they had to come downtown to use these stores. So all your people centered around Fremont Street when they came down shopping.

**Let's talk a little about Fremont Street. What was the appearance of the street when you first came here?**

When we first came here, like I said, down on Fremont Street you had these department stores and you had Allen and Hansen and whatever. Then up further going towards Main Street, this is where all your hotels were. When we first came here, I believe the only hotels that were on Fremont Street—you had the Horseshoe Hotel, the Boulder Club, the Golden Nugget and a few other small hotels, which right now have been torn down. They've gone into your bigger hotels on Fremont Street. You've got the Silver Queen now.

**When did these come into existence?**

I believe the first big hotel to be built was, I believe, in 1956 and that was the Fremont Hotel and that really started the boom downtown. The Fremont Hotel was one of the first hotels to have a high-rise in downtown Las Vegas. From there they opened up the Silver Queen. Currently today you have the Union Plaza and still a few of the older hotels are down there, like Jackie Gaughan's El Cortez and a few of the others that are still in existence. But even these old hotels are now going up in these high-rises and whatever.

**What about like the light show down there now? How was that when you first came here?**

I can still remember when we first came here I had never seen lights like this. It seemed like the whole street was lit up. It was a big thing when you're young. Now I guess they even have more

lights downtown. But as you stay here awhile, you don't notice all those things. But it was quite a scene going down Fremont Street and seeing all these lights and everything little up, all these hotels.

**What about the hospital situation? Where were they located?**

The only hospital when we first came here that I can remember was Las Vegas Hospital and that was located in the downtown area. That was about six to seven blocks from Fremont Street. The reason the hospital was located down there...that's where the town actually started was in the downtown area. So that was the first hospital to go up. From there, I would say about 1958 or '59, they opened Southern Nevada Memorial. That was going towards the west part of town.

**Now, that opened because the west was starting to fill in a little bit?**

Well, yeah, it was starting to fill in. I believe when they opened Southern Nevada Memorial, they probably had it on their mind that they wanted to—they didn't realize the west part of town was going to grow that fast, but they probably wanted to be away from it a little bit, have land to expand on. That's what I they opened up there. Most hospitals today want to have a lot of room to expand because the hospital business is a big business today. They need two or three acres in case they want to build on, whatever. Down at Las Vegas Hospital, where it was located, there was no room for expansion. There were houses and everything around there. That's why it's currently now defunct. The only thing they have now there is a few doctor offices and things like that.

**Let's go into the recreation available for kids, say, in 1953. Were there any such things as golf courses, baseball diamonds, tennis courts around?**

Well, as I can remember when we came to town in 1953, the only actual golf course, I believe, was the Desert Inn Golf Course. That was started by the late Wilbur Clark, who's currently not

around anymore. But anyway, that was the first big golf course. When we first came here, the only thing I can remember for kids to do was they had the Last Frontier and they had the Last Frontier Village in there, which was like an old western town. They had a carnival there and they had bumper cars. They had old cars that you can climb in and out. They had pinball machines and whatever. This was where we would hang out every weekend. Our folks would take us over there. That was, as I can remember, the only thing to do. Baseball diamonds and everything, there was no such thing then. If they had a few, the only ones they had were downtown Las Vegas, I believe, by the city park.

**When did tennis courts start getting built?**

Well, tennis courts and baseball diamonds and everything started coming into existence in the late '50s. Baseball has always been a popular sport here, but the only field I can remember that we had was Cashman Field. From there they built on where today in Las Vegas baseball is really a big thing.

**Where is Cashman Field located?**

Cashman Field is located on Las Vegas Boulevard. It's currently not there anymore. They've torn that down. It was never a real good field. So now they've increased the baseball fields all over town in Las Vegas. The high schools have baseball fields and they have baseball fields at Sunset Park and all over the town. So baseball fields have expanded and they no longer needed Cashman Field anymore. Besides that, as land's gotten more valuable, evidently they're going to do some building of homes or apartments over there now because they've torn it completely down.

**What about land value around here? How was it when you first came here? You talked about it was hard to get land.**

Well, land is the same way today as it was then. People are saying today, “Gee, if I had bought land twenty years ago...If I had bought a hundred acres, I'd be a multimillionaire and I could retire now.” Of course, a lot of people did buy land that had money that came into town and did buy land and are retired now. But the people will be saying the same thing twenty years from now because if you buy land today, if you can afford to buy land, in twenty years, the way inflation has hit us, you'll be able to retire and be a millionaire then, also. So land values continue to increase and especially out west. The population of the United States seems to be moving west. People want to get around the good weather and there's more and more older people today that want to retire in places like Nevada or Arizona where the weather is good and they feel like they can have a better and longer life, more activities.

**Let's go back to the golf courses for a sec. When did Municipal and, say, Craig Ranch come into effect?**

Well, I believe—you can't quote me here—but I believe Municipal Golf Course came into existence in the late 1950s and probably Craig Ranch in the 1960s when a lot of these hotels built their own golf courses. You have the Stardust Golf Course. You've currently got the Las Vegas Country Club, Desert Inn, which is old. You've got Black Mountain out in Henderson.

**Where is the Stardust Golf?**

Stardust Golf Course is now currently located on Desert Inn. It's been renamed a few times, but I believe it's still named now the Stardust Golf Course.

**Were these golf courses popular at this time?**

Until tennis actually came into existence here, until tennis started getting big in the United States, golf was the big game in Las Vegas. And the reason for that is golf was a game that you could play year-round in Las Vegas. It was outdoors and a lot of these hotel people worked

nights and whatever and were able to come out here and play a lot of golf in the daytime. This town is mostly night people. There's more night people probably in this town than in any other city in the United States. So a lot of these people have time in the daytime to go out and play golf. Currently tennis is bigger probably in Las Vegas, tennis and racquetball than golf.

**Let's go into tennis a little bit. What have you seen about tennis, the pro tournaments, when did they come into effect around here?**

Well, I was just reading in the paper this morning, the first actually I think pro tennis came in 1972 at Caesars Palace. It's currently the Alan King Tennis Classic. I'm not sure what it was named then. But the first winner of this classic was Pancho Gonzales and that really became a big thing in Las Vegas. That started to attract a lot of people to tennis. Pancho Gonzales won it the first two years in 1972, I believe, and 1973.

**What about the drive-in restaurants? Let's kind of jump subjects here. What was the big deal about them? Was that a form of entertainment, say?**

Well, the drive-in restaurants, which have kind of gone defunct now in the last few years, when I was going to high school was the big thing. We had the Blue Onion and Sill's on the Strip. The Blue Onion was located on Fremont Street, way down on Fremont Street. Then they had Sill's located on the Strip. That was the two big hangouts for teenagers. They'd cruise up and down Fremont Street and then they'd stop in the Blue Onion, have their Cokes and whatever, and then they'd go over to Sill's. That was really a meeting place for the teenagers in the late 1960s—late 1950s.

**You say you hung around there. Then you should really be able to tell. Do you have any idea what the pot scene was like at the time?**

Well, when I went to high school, as I can remember, there was no pot scene. I don't recall any

of that. The pot scene really got big and I think it really started happening probably about 1965 or 1966. When I went to high school, the way they entertained themselves was they drank beer and wine, whatever. You saw more of that than you saw pot. I can't even remember seeing pot. Pot really got big in the middle 1960s when they had this Vietnam conflict and whatever.

**You're talking about beer and wine. Was it easy to obtain beer and wine as it is today?**

Well, I believe it was probably as easy to obtain it then as it is now. It's about the same way now. Send someone in to get it or whatever.

**Let's go to a big thing here, the conventions in Las Vegas. How were the conventions back in 1953?**

In 1953, as I remember, there was no such thing as the convention business. The thing that really made conventions made them big, they started coming into existence earlier, I think in the early 1960s, was all these hotels with the added tourism, the added growth of Las Vegas really started to expand. Most of these hotels built their own convention halls inside. So they were able to house their own conventions. Like Caesars Palace probably has five or six small convention halls where they can seat up to five or six hundred people at a time. That really started the conventions booming. From there we opened our convention center where that also attracted a lot of people.

**About what year did that come around?**

I believe the convention center opened in the early 1960s. Of course, the convention business here is fantastic now in Las Vegas because—I think we talked about this before—a lot of people like to come from Back East from the cold weather and whatever and have a convention in the city of Las Vegas where not only they can enjoy the warm weather and the recreation activities, they can come out here and gamble. That's the big attraction. But also, besides the gambling

they can come out here and the weather is always pretty good. They can play golf or they can come out and play tennis and do many things that they couldn't do if they had gone to a city like Atlantic City or New York in the wintertime. It's impossible to even get outside.

**The conventions tie in pretty well with the hotels. So why don't we talk about the hotels a little bit and how they appeared when you first came here?**

When we first came here, all your hotels or the greater amount of hotels were downtown. When we came here the only hotels on the Strip that I can remember...we had, I believe, the Flamingo, the Sands, the Last Frontier and then I believe the Sahara. I think that came into existence while we were here. Those are the four or five big main hotels.

**Now, who were the people that set up the gambling? We know that people from Las Vegas are going to Atlantic City to help set up gambling there. Who came here?**

Most of the gambling was run by people that came out from Chicago and New York that had a good background in gambling because even though a lot of gambling wasn't legal, as it's still not in Chicago and New York, there was a lot of illegal gambling going on. These people had a good background in gambling. In order for gambling to be successful, you have to have this type of people. These are the kind of people that came out here to actually run these hotels. People from Back East, people from Miami where there was a lot of betting and things going on came out here to run the hotels in Las Vegas.

**Let's talk about the structure of the hotels.**

When we came out—you mean as far as building the hotels?

**Yeah.**

Las Vegas or the West was always known as a flat area of the United States. When we came out everything was flat. Everything was on one floor. And now the big thing is for high-rises

because like on the Strip they're kind of running out of room, so there's only way one they can go and that's to go up. So what you see now is a lot of high-rises. The Sahara has got a high-rise. The Trop is having a new high-rise. Caesars Palace has expanded into a high-rise. The Hilton has a new high-rise. Everybody is going up. As the land gets more and more valuable, instead of spreading out they're going up instead.

**Let's have some type of order that the hotels were built over the years.**

I don't remember the exact order. I believe the Last Frontier became the New Frontier. That was one of the first hotels to go up to expand. I take that back. The Thunderbird was here when we came. That was one of the real old hotels. So the Thunderbird is now currently the Silverbird and that's expanded. I believe the Hacienda was one of the newer hotels to come into existence in the late 1950s. Then you had just one after another, Caesars Palace, just many other hotels coming in.

**What was the length of Strip at the time?**

The length of the Strip when we first came here stretched from Sahara and Las Vegas Boulevard to the Flamingo Hotel. That was the end of the Strip. When they built the Hacienda in the late 1950s or early 1960s, this was way away from everybody. Everybody said, "Oh, my god, this hotel will never even stay in existence; it's too far out." But as expansion kept on happening, the Hacienda right now is just nothing. It's a stone's throw from any of the other hotels.

**Let's talk about the union and how they affect the hotels and how it has developed over the years.**

I'm no expert in unions. But the big union here has always been—well, the two unions, the Culinary Union and the Teamsters Union.

**Were they in existence when you came here?**



The Culinary Union was in existence and so was the Teamsters, I believe, because the Culinary is the people that actually run the hotels. That's the union for the waitresses and the busboys. All the people that work with the food services are involved with the Culinary Union. The Teamsters are in a different capacity in the hotel. But your food servers are with the Culinary Union.

**Let's talk about who was in charge of these.**

In charge of the unions?

**Yeah.**

I believe the same people that are in charge of them today it's an elective job. These people get elected by the different members in the unions. They hold elections and whatever. I'm not sure myself who are the heads of the unions right now in Las Vegas. It's always been an election process.

**Let's talk about what kind of jobs that the kids had here in 1953. What could they have taken?**

Well, when we first came here in Las Vegas, the only type of jobs most kids had were they were involved in some way with the hotels. They were either busboys or they did some maintenance or whatever. Also, they had jobs like working in department stores in like Penney's and Sears. But at that time we didn't have a lot of retail stores and whatever. So most kids that had jobs worked somewhere around the hotels. There weren't a lot of jobs for kids like there are today. Today the hotel industry has expanded so much and almost any kid can get in the Culinary Union and be a busboy or work in room service or something in the hotels. If they can't get into the hotels, there's a tremendous boom in retail stores and different stores in the area. So they can come in as clerks or they can get jobs as stock boys or whatever. Also, with the expansion of the

recreation activities, you have a lot of pool boys. You have a lot of kids that work on the golf courses and kids that work around the tennis courts and whatever. So they've really opened up a lot of different jobs for kids.

This is probably a really unique town because if you go back to the Midwest or back to the East, you'll see these kids don't earn near the money they do here. Because especially if a kid is involved in a hotel, the tipping is so great in these hotels whether they're a pool boy or work as a busboy or whatever, they make outstanding wages compared to a kid that's working Back East in a retail store or whatever. There's a lot of money to be made in Las Vegas. There's a lot of easy money to be made, such as tips and things like that.

**What job did you have when you first started working?**

I only started working when I was a sophomore in high school.

**And what year was that?**

I'm not sure of the exact year right off. It was in the '60s. My first job was in the Flamingo Hotel; I was a busboy. I stayed there through my senior year in high school. So I had a good job there. Actually, I had to wait on four or five tables. That's all I did is serve the pit bosses coffee and tea or, if they wanted a doughnut or something from the snack bar, I'd run get them a doughnut. So I had a pretty good job. Believe it not, at that time for a busboy I really earned some outstanding money for being sixteen and seventeen years old.

**What kind of people were these pit bosses?**

Well, you get into hotel people or pit bosses, you're talking about—Las Vegas—this is my opinion—it's a very cold city. Everybody here it seems like in the hotel industry has one thing on their mind. They're around a lot of money, so these people are cold. They never get too overly friendly with you. If you go into a hotel, it's not like working in a retail job. People never

get to know you that well because you're dealing with large sums of money and these people are nervous and whatever. So it's a different type of atmosphere probably than anyplace else in the country.

**What type of pressure is put on these pit bosses?**

Well, the big pressure, of course, to put on a pit boss on a person in the hotel...the hotels are here to make money and if they're going to make money, they have to win; that's the big thing. When you're in charge of the twenty-one pit or you're over a crap table or whatever, you're there to watch that everything flows right and that the house makes money. There's no way that you can have too many winners and that the house is going to make money. You've got to make money constantly. And that's these people's jobs is to make sure everything runs smoothly.

**In other words, could they lose their job if, say, the house lost so much money?**

That's another unique thing about Las Vegas or about the hotel business. You can be in a job ten or twelve years and the next day come to work and you don't have a job. Because, let's say, the house had a bad day or one of the owner's sons is moving into town and needs a job. You may come in here and not have a job the next day. It's strictly a juice business; it's who you know, not what you know.

**Let's go back to the hotels in, say, 1953. Now, who basically owned these?**

Well, I'm not sure. We had a lot of individual owners or people that came out from Back East that owned these hotels. They usually had a group of people that owned these hotels. Like when we first came here, I believe Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin all had pieces. They used to play at these hotels in the shows and they all had slight shares of these hotels. Today most of the entertainers don't have any pieces of the hotels. They're controlled now by Hughes and the Hiltons and people like that, big groups.

**Let's go into how Las Vegas has influenced you as a person.**

Well, like I said before, Las Vegas is probably a very unique place. People are cold in the hotels. If you go back to the Midwest or somewhere, into a farming community, you'll see a lot friendlier type of people. But in Las Vegas, and this is strictly my opinion, I think the people are kind of cold. You can't get too close to them. It's that type of atmosphere. That's mainly influenced by this gambling. Gambling just does that to you. Now, there are jobs in Las Vegas you can go to, retail jobs and jobs like that where you can see a different type people. But if you're in the hotels and you deal around these people, they are very unique. It's very business when you're dealing with this amount of money.

**Let's talk a little bit about the weather now. How was the weather when you first came here?**

Well, the weather has changed quite a bit since we've been here. When we first came here, Las Vegas was known as a very dry climate. It still is very dry compared to most parts of country. But as the town has expanded, more hotels and more swimming pools, it seems like everybody in Las Vegas, every other house is now putting in a swimming pool. So this has brought a lot of humidity to Las Vegas in the summer. With the population increase you have more and more lawns and more and more gardens and whatever. So the humidity has increased here quite a bit.

**Okay, Stan, let's talk about the caliber of sports in Las Vegas when you first came here.**

Well, the caliber...there wasn't many sports. We talked about this a little bit before. The sports here wasn't much. It's only the last eight or ten years where sporting events have really increased. We could talk, for one, a little bit about basketball, which has come on very strong here in the last three or four years, five years. With the arrival of Jerry Tarkanian at UNLV, basketball has really expanded here. The university is expanding their basketball. And in the

high schools we've got a lot better caliber of basketball now. We're probably almost on the level now of these California players. They can come out and play every day here in Las Vegas just like they can in California. So it's really become a big program here now. Like, when I first went to high school and everything, you'd be lucky if you filled up half the gym on a regular basketball game unless you were playing Rancho, a big rivalry. But now the basketball gyms, as I understand it, are completely sold out for these big games and people are becoming more and more aware and more and more interested in this type of program. A lot of this, like I said, has to do with Jerry Tarkanian who came here from Long Beach. He's made this basketball haven here in Las Vegas.

People are just going mad to get these tickets, what I'm talking about now, for college. But to obtain a ticket now to go to a college game, you either have to be a scholarship donor or possibly a student. It's amazing, but they only issue about forty or fifty seats now a year for their student body because they just do not have enough room in the convention center to support both their scholarship donors and the students. I imagine that they feel it's more important right now to get the money into the school and into the sports program, whatever, and the more scholarships they have, the more money they can put back into the school.

**Now, I realize that when you first moved here, you didn't go to college. But do you have any idea of what kind of enthusiasm there was for college basketball?**

There was very little. When UNLV really got started in their basketball program, there was very little enthusiasm. They used to play some of their games in their gym right on campus and the other games they'd hold at the convention center. At that time they were lucky if they could fill up half the convention center. There was just no real big interest in basketball. And then when the university went into big-time basketball, division one or whatever, and Jerry Tarkanian came

here and everything, basketball has just boomed. I mean it's just impossible [to get tickets].

These people are just basketball crazy in this town. I believe myself if they built an arena sat twenty-two thousand people, they could fill this up for almost every game; that's how the craze is here for basketball.

**Let's kind of drop that subject and let's go on and talk about the tourist attraction in Las Vegas. What brings the people here and what brought them here before that made it so that Las Vegas could grow?**

Well, of course, the main thing, like we talked about before, is gaming. That's what's brought the people to Las Vegas. Everybody wants to come here and gamble especially people that have never tried their hand at it. Young people, old people, anybody that has never gambled want to get in on it. Of course, coming to Las Vegas, there's many things to do. You not only can gamble, the climate is ideal. You can go out and thirty minutes from here we have Mount Charleston where you could either go there skiing or you can go up there on a picnic or whatever. It's probably one of the few places in the country where you go from a warm climate to a cold climate. You can actually go up there and ski while it's seventy degrees here in Las Vegas. So this is another attraction. Then we have the biggest manmade lake in the United States and that's Lake Mead.

**When was that made?**

I'm not sure. I think the Lake Mead was brought about when they dug the dam in 1930s and that; that's when Lake Mead really started going. There's really good fishing out there and a lot of people say it's probably one of the best skiing lakes and recreational lakes in the west. It's just a tremendous recreation site now. There's many, many people that come in with their campers from places like California and Arizona just to go fishing and go skiing and whatever. Because

if you've ever been to California, they don't have a lot of great lakes to ski. If you want to go skiing there, you have to go in these ocean outlets and everything. If you compare them with Lake Mead, there's no comparison.

**Okay, Stan, what's your overall view of the changes that have occurred in Nevada?**

Well, just to sum this up from when we came here to the present day, I think Nevada has made great strides. They've made great strides in the gambling industry. We've expanded the gambling industry. Recreation in the hotels have expanded; they have more things to do. When we first came here, if you were a kid and you came with your family, you had nothing to do but stand outside these hotels. Now you have youth hotels and you have many activities, like Hilton has their youth hotel, the Circus Circus has many games and recreation in the hotel to keep them busy. So this has helped tourism a lot in Las Vegas where people know they can bring their kids and the kids will have something to do.

Then the other things...the school system has got progressively better since I've been here. There are a lot more schools that have opened up. The caliber of teachers is a lot better. Just many things in our school system is a lot better.

Then when we go into our recreation, we can say that the recreation in Las Vegas has probably come further than many, many other cities. We've expanded our tennis and baseball has become big here, basketball. Just the overall sports' view here has become very big.

**The person that has been interviewed is Stan Weiner. The date is March 12th, 1978, at eight a.m. The place: 3952 Florrie Circle, Las Vegas, Nevada. The interviewer is Kyle Wolfe, 2109 Sundale. The project is Local History Project, Oral Interview, Observations of a Las Vegas Man.**

**[End of recorded interview]**